

***Government and the State***

***Part B***

**Source: *Magruder's American Government, 2005 Edition***

**Chapter I, Section I**

## **I. What brought about the rise of the state?**

Scholars are divided on the origins of the state. First, the historical record is inconclusive. But scholars have offered a few theories. We will discuss four of them. They are:

**The Force Theory**

**The Evolutionary Theory**

**The Divine Right Theory**

**The Social Contract Theory**

## 2. Regarding the origins of the state, what is *The Force Theory*?

**The Force Theory** holds that the state emerged when either a strongman or a clique coerced a population in a given area to submit to the rule of the strongest.

## 3. Regarding the origins of the state, what is *The Evolutionary Theory*?

**The Evolutionary Theory** holds that the state emerged out of the governance of nomadic families. Over time, small families grew into extended families, then into clans and tribes, and so forth.

The heads of families, in turn, took on the role of governing the extended families, and later the tribes. The development of agriculture brought about the end of nomadic life for some clans and tribes, thus creating the setting in which a more sophisticated version of the state was born.

## 4. Regarding the origins of the state, what is *The Divine Right Theory*?

**The Divine Right Theory**--popular among European monarchs in the 1600s and 1700s--held that God had ordained for royals to rule over their realms. Subjects of the monarch were morally bound to obey the King. Since the American and French Revolutions of the late 1700s, the Divine Right Theory of the state has largely been discarded.

## 5. Regarding the origins of the state, what is the *Social Compact Theory*?

Basically the **social compact theory** is an idea that the origin of the state is found in an agreement between the government and the people (the governed). The *social compact theory* had an important impact on the development of the American system.

## 6. What was Thomas Hobbes' contribution to Social Compact Theory?

One of the earliest thinkers to offer a theory that the state rose out of an agreement between was Thomas Hobbes in the 1600s. Hobbes argued that, prior to the rise of government, man lived in a “**state of nature**,” and that life was “**nasty, brutish, and short**.” True, in a state of nature man was free, but his life was always in peril.

According to Hobbes, the institution of the state arose due to an agreement among people to give government the power to protect them from danger. This agreement, per Hobbes, was a **social contract** in which the people gave government the powers necessary to give them security. The government, in turn, would wield the sword on behalf of the safety of all.

## 7. What was John Locke's contribution to **Social Contract Theory**?

Like Hobbes, Locke saw argued that the state arose as an agreement between the government and the governed. But unlike Hobbes, Locke saw the **social contract** between the government and governed as **conditional**.

Per Locke, the government legitimately held **authority** only as long as it protected the **natural rights** of the people, those being **life, liberty, and property**.

In the logic of Locke, a chief duty of government was to protect the individual natural rights of life, liberty, and property. Should it fail to do so, then **the people** possessed a **right to revolt** against the government.

A belief in **natural rights** and a **right of revolution** are key to understanding John Locke's contribution to **social contract theory**.

## 8. John Locke's ideas about natural rights and a right of revolution had a big impact on whom?

Thomas Jefferson, the primary author of the American *Declaration of Independence*.

9. So are you saying that the *American Declaration of Independence* was based, in part, on the ideas of John Locke?

Yes I am.

10. What were some of the key events in the rise of the United States of America?

In April 1775, fighting broke out in New England between American colonials and British military forces.

The Second Continental Congress declared independence of 13 American Colonies from Great Britain in July 1776.

In 1777 the Revolutionary Americans adopted the *Articles of Confederation*, a constitution that would govern the USA until the late 1780s

In October 1781, American Revolutionary forces (and French forces) defeated a major British force in Virginia, thus ending major fighting between Americans and British.

In September 1783, Great Britain recognized the independence of 13 American States, those being New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

11. In 1789, what replaced the *Articles of Confederation*?

The *Constitution of the United States of America*.

This constitution is still in effect today. It serves as the foundational charter of our government, and essentially the American *state*.

In the near future we will study the *U.S. Constitution* in some depth.